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- I^b Would you prefer a system on the basis of the conventional alphabets of European languages?
- II^b Should this system be founded on a combination of different alphabets or upon a single one with a liberal use of diacritic signs?
- III^b Should there be a common system for all languages, or a separate one for each of the principal groups?
- IV. Do you favor the adoption of one of the existing systems? if so, which do you prefer?
- V. Would you adopt this system without change, or, if not, with what modifications?
- VI Or do you wish an entirely new system to be arranged?

I am happy to say that this enterprise has met everywhere with a very favorable reception. Many of our leading phonetists have been kind enough to send more or less extended answers to the questions herein propounded, and certainly the need of a standard system is generally recognized. On the other hand, there is already satisfactory evidence of the regrettable fact that the various scholars differ considerably, almost hopelessly, in their views; all the extremes are strongly represented, and it will be difficult to reach a final conclusion which will satisfy all. However this may be, we may hope to be able at the next meeting of the Association to give a fair representation of the opinion of the scientific world on a standard system of soundnotation.

GUSTAF KARSTEN.

University of Indiana.

THE SCOPE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN EDUCATION.

It is certainly one of the remarkable anomalies in the annals of education, that, until quite recently, the claims of English literature as a factor in education have been so much neglected. True, we have been taught to read and write, perhaps not too properly; and there are few schools, since the days of BLAIR, that have not included in their courses a certain vague and ill-defined study known as Rhetoric, extending (as it is variously supposed to

extend) anywhere from the thorny paths of grammar or the deeper jungle of logic to that shadowy limbo, æsthetic criticism. This is no place to pause over that much-vexed question, a definition of rhetoric; but we may at least affirm that rhetoric is neither grammar, logic, nor æsthetics. Whatever else it may or may not be, it is here considered as a mere accident, applicable in attaining a due appreciation of a cuneiform inscription no less than of the perhaps equally cryptic utterances of Mr. BROWNING.

We are fortunately well past that period in which evidence must be adduced to prove that English literature has a place in modern education; though, if we are to judge from the results of a comparatively recent discussion of the subject in England, we must believe that, as to method, there is far from the same unanimity of opinion. If we would understand how to teach a subject, we must first ascertain the range of its function and the limitations of that range. It is folly to claim for the study of history all that can be claimed for the study of mathematics, just as it is folly to claim for the study of mathematics all that can be claimed for the study of history. There is no more likelihood of the discovery of a panacea in education than in medicine. Hence we should first look to the limitations, without a consideration of which, the true nature of our subject can not be understood.

The first limitation to the value of English literature as a study lies in the fatal facility that always attends reading in the mother tongue, a facility that too often renders us content with an approximate rather than the real understanding of a literary product. It is so easy and so interesting to skim the surface on the skates of ready reading, that we escape many a difficulty into which the steady footfalls of real scholarship must have precipitated us. Unfortunately a difficulty escaped is not a difficulty mastered, and our plodding German brethren, armed with the heel-points of laborious research, not infrequently come to shore laden with the living spoils that dwell beneath the icy surface.

This facility of ready reading has involved the good old expression, *belles-lettres*, in disrepute—an expression which, with the delight-

ful uncertainty of many a similar term, once meant pretty much anything within that charmed circle, "elegant literature." Under the changes of our day it has floated to the surface, the veriest scum and skimmings of gossip about writing. We have no more need for *belles-lettres*. Like the "music, French and dancing" which once constituted the three graces of the young ladies' academy, let it shrink away into out-of-the-way corners, not to revisit the glimpses of the moon save as the courtly shade of a Beau Nash or Brummell.

Unfortunately this deserved disgrace of *belles-lettres* has led to a reaction, under which we are still suffering. Little did SHAKESPEARE think, when he put into Hamlet's mouth the answer to Polonius' question: "What do you read, my lord?" that he was giving to his future commentators the most applicable of all mottos: "Words, words, words." But it is not only of the emptiness of much criticism that we would complain, for that belongs rather to the other extreme. Quite as reprehensible, though more worthy of our respect, are students that see in CHAUCER and SHAKESPEARE merely two interesting and practicably inexhaustible treasure-houses of quaint and antique expression. Of little use to such is the glory of either temple, that encloses in one architectural whole a structure, such as has never heretofore been reared by human intelligence. The examination of single blocks, nay, even a proof of the quarry whence certain of them have been drawn, is necessary and useful; but we must stand off, oblivious of mere detail, if we would know the real significance of such creations. To the philologist and to the word-monger we feel tempted to suggest that, for his purposes, anything contemporaneous is quite as good as SHAKESPEARE and CHAUCER; for hovel and palace alike have been wrought of this selfsame quarry, and it is only in the cutting, of which he understands not a whit, that any difference is to be detected. In the words of a recent English writer on this topic: "Up to the present time philology has not merely filled a space in the economy of education altogether disproportionate to its insignificance as an instrument of culture, but has usurped the place of the only methods of

interpretation by which the study of ancient and modern literature can be rendered effective and fruitful.*

We would not seek to decry the admirable results of philology and antiquarian research. Both have their uses, and these are as valuable as any to which the human mind can be directed. But the question here is not one of the comparative dignity of one pursuit above another, but as to whether an examination of a brick or a cursory excursion over the premises are, either of them, well calculated to lead the student to a just understanding of his subject, or to produce that training which is the paramount duty of all rational education.

Thus we have before us the two extremes to which the teaching of English literature has heretofore tended. And it may be affirmed that the best results can be obtained neither from dilettanteism nor from antiquarian philology.

It is to be assumed as granted that the chief value of facts is not intrinsic. In education they are rather to be regarded as the means to the accomplishment of an end, the judicious training of the mind. This premised, we must at once admit the superior capabilities of mathematics and the more synthetic languages as machines for mental discipline, and then examine the field to see if there is anything beyond mental gymnastics that claims the attention of the teacher.

Matters of taste are far from being trivialities; and the training of the student in that quality of mind which may justly be regarded as the highest exercise of judgment, is not to be accounted beneath the consideration of the careful teacher. Taste is the root of art, and art is the flower of civilization. But it is to be remembered that art is not an ornamental pinnacle superimposed on society and altogether unessential to the material wellbeing of the structure. It is more. Art is an integral factor, to be considered a component and essential part. Hence follows the absurdity of making the study of English literature a mere superfluousness, to be imbibed as a sort of froth or bead on the overflowing cup of learning.

* "An Educational Crisis and how to avert it." CHURTON COLLINS, *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 28 and 32, 1886.

From any point of view more commanding than the above, no one can doubt the excellence of the study of English literature for such a purpose, eminently fitted as it is to develop the nicer judgment, and involving as it does a more or less intimate acquaintance with the best that has been thought and written by a race inferior to none in literary attainment.

We would therefore state that the true place of English literature in education is that of a study designed to train and cultivate the taste upon a sufficient basis of necessary fact; and further that, far from being an ornamental appendage to be affixed, if there be time, to "more necessary practical work," the cultivation of taste by this means should be co-extensive with the range of fact, with which it is equally important.

The recognition of this, the true position of the study of English literature, becomes the more important when we recall the remarkable lack of this same element of taste in our popular education. It is this that has given rise to the stigma that our American civilization is "not interesting;" and it is likewise this that holds back the natural and logical growth of our colleges by crowding out the humanities to make room for technical studies, and producing for us specialists in place of educated men devoting their attention to certain lines of investigation. It is not the least deplorable result, that many a man's ignorance beyond the pale of his own special work has brought about failure within it. It is, therefore, just because this factor, the education of taste, has been so neglected, especially in courses where the older humanities do not enter to take its place, that we would point out the essential province of English literature to be that above presented.

FELIX E. SCHELLING.

University of Pennsylvania.

ENGLISH LITERATURE.

A History of Eighteenth Century Literature.

By EDMUND GOSSE. M. A. London and New York: Macmillan & Co. 1889. 8vo, pp. viii, 415.

The present book is a marked improvement upon Mr. Gosse's previous work, 'From

Shakespeare to Pope.' His grasp of the subject is firmer; his judgments are characterized by greater discernment and acuteness than were exhibited in his history of the rise of classical poetry in England. Mr. Gosse has evidently profited by the strictures which were made upon his earlier volume, and there is a frankness and manliness in his mode of accepting adverse criticism when it is rational and salutary, which we cannot fail to admire and to commend to the imitation of others. The possession of this rare and praiseworthy characteristic leads us to predict for Mr. Gosse a still wider range of scholarly usefulness, critical power and literary sympathy. With genuine pleasure we approve the essential features of this work and commend it to the favorable regard of teachers and students of English Literature.

While cordially bestowing this broad commendation, let us notice specifically some points of the book which we think admit of still further improvement. We are aware that the nature of the series of which this volume forms a part requires limitation and circumscriptions, and that the entire series might have been assigned to that particular part of the subject allotted to Mr. Gosse; still, the narrative is not unmarked by omissions, and in some instances fails to take advantage of a certain *suggestiveness* in the topic under consideration, a suggestiveness which detects parallels, coincidences and illustrations, assists the process of coördination, stimulates the faculties of the student, and illumines, as well as elucidates, the story of literary evolution as no other method of treatment can do so effectively. A mere word would have been sufficient in many cases, for we cannot suspect Mr. Gosse of the unwisdom of disregarding Sir William Hamilton's famous injunction—"never do for the pupil what he can do for himself;" still, the "mystic hint" which kindles the suggestive faculty is oftentimes wanting.

To illustrate our general proposition by concrete examples, Mr. Gosse in his sketch of GEORGE LILLO (p. 393) omits the most interesting circumstance in the history of that forgotten worthy, namely, the publication of 'The Fatal Curiosity' for the use of schools,